Program Policy

for

French

Second Language Programs

June 1998

NOVA SCOTIA
Education and Culture

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FRENCH SECOND LANGUAGE PROGRAMS

BACKGROUND

> *The world is no longer a collection of isolated regions and cultures. It is a huge collective of interactive and interdependent communities. Learning another language, if not several other languages, has almost become a necessity or at the very least, a desire, for many people.* (Le Lien, Vol. VII, No. 3 Second Language Education Centre May 1995.)

Research has shown that learning a second language enhances students' general cognitive and communicative skills. Other benefits cited by researchers include improved reading and research skills and increased insight, not only into the target culture but also into one's own culture. It has also been shown that mastery of a second language can make it easier to learn a third and a fourth language.

French is the natural second language for many Canadians to learn because it is so widely used and accessible throughout the country. Availability of texts and references for the Francophone market in this country, and access to French-speaking teachers, to French media, and to role models and activities in Francophone communities make it possible to offer viable French programs. In addition, knowledge of Canada's second official language helps students to better understand the history, development, and politics of their country.

French is a relatively easy language for English students to learn. There are close historical ties between the two languages—their alphabets and sentence structure are similar and many English words come from French or from Latin, a common root for both languages.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to provide Nova Scotia school boards, schools, and teachers with direction regarding the delivery of French second language programs.

MISSION STATEMENT

The Acadian and French Language Services Branch of the Department of Education and Culture is committed to providing educational services in French as a first language and French as a second language that foster students' full personal development.

GOALS OF FRENCH SECOND LANGUAGE PROGRAMS

French second language programs are intended to contribute to the development of the knowledge, skills, and attitudes described in the *Essential Graduation Learnings*.

French Second Language Programs are designed to enable **all** students to

- communicate effectively in French using the listening, speaking, viewing, reading, and writing modes (communication)
- demonstrate a better understanding of their own and others' cultural heritage and identity with particular emphasis on "French-speaking communities" (citizenship)
- demonstrate preparedness for further learning, particularly where French is the language of instruction (personal development)
- work and study purposefully, both independently and in groups (personal development)
- solve problems individually and collaboratively (problem solving)
- express their ideas and feelings using various art forms (aesthetic expression)
- locate, evaluate, adapt, create, and share information using a variety of sources and technologies (technological competence)

DEFINITION OF FRENCH SECOND LANGUAGE PROGRAMS

Nova Scotia offers four French second language programs:

- Core French (grades 4–12)
- Extended Core French (grades 7–12), following Core French grades 4-6
- Early French Immersion (primary–grade 12)
- Late French Immersion (grades 7–12), following Core French grades 4-6

Core French, Extended Core French, and French Immersion programs are designed to accommodate all students.

Extended Core French and Immersion programs are offered to those students in Anglophone schools who wish to develop a greater degree of competence in French. These programs represent a long-term commitment on the part of the board.

POLICY

Program Implementation

Roles and Responsibilities of Partners

All education partners will work together to provide French second language programs that allow students to develop to their full potential.

Department of Education and Culture

The Department of Education and Culture, Acadian and French Language Services Branch, is responsible for providing leadership and orientation for French second language programs in Nova Scotia public schools.

In the context of this mandate, the Acadian and French Language Services Branch shall

- develop and recommend to the Minister of Education and Culture, policies and priorities in all areas affecting French second language education
- promote and plan French second language education
- establish the goals, outcomes and learning standards of French second language programs
- evaluate and recommend appropriate support materials for French second language programs
- provide initial in-servicing for the implementation of new French programs
- recommend funding through Special Project grants for projects that support the approved French second language programs
- assist the Minister of Education and Culture in negotiating all federal assistance programs aimed at promoting the use of the official languages in education

Regional School Boards

The regional school boards have the overall responsibility for the direction and administration of French second language programs in the system.

Therefore, each school board shall

- ensure that its schools adhere to the Minister's policy concerning French second language education
- designate administrative responsibility for French second language programs at the superintendent or assistant superintendent level
- initiate and evaluate French second language programs in the system
- provide assistance to teachers in the appropriate approaches and strategies of instruction for French second language programs
- provide for the effective and efficient management of all Minority Language and Special Project funds

Principal

The principal of a public school is the educational leader of the school and has overall responsibility for implementing and administering French second language programs and courses in the school.

Therefore, the principal shall

- implement and co-ordinate the French second language programs and courses in the school as prescribed in the *Public School Programs* document
- create and maintain an appropriate and effective learning environment for French second language programs
- provide the curriculum guidelines and the recommended resources
- identify and provide professional development needs for staff involved in French second language programs
- assist the school board with the selection of qualified staff
- assist in evaluating the performance of staff involved in French second language programs
- ensure regular communication with parents about French second language programs and policies

Teacher

The French second language teacher in a public school shall

- implement French second language programs and courses as prescribed in the *Public School Programs* document
- implement teaching strategies that foster a positive learning environment and help students achieve the outcomes of French second language programs
- maintain a professional competence regarding current pedagogical practices for French Second Language learning
- maintain a professional competence regarding the subjects taught in French

Program Description

Basic Principle of all Programs

All teaching in French second language programs shall be in French.

Core French Program

Core French shall be offered in all Anglophone schools in Nova Scotia from grade 4 through to grade 12. Core French is a program where French is studied and taught in regularly scheduled instructional periods. The program is compulsory for grades 4–6 students.

From September 1997, Core French will be a required course for all junior high students beginning grade 7 for the first time. This requirement will extend to grade 8 in September 1998 and grade 9 in September 1999. Where offered, Mi'kmaq or Gaelic will fulfil this requirement.

Time allotment will be as prescribed in the *Public School Programs* document.

Extended Core French Program

Anglophone school boards may offer an Extended Core French Program that starts in grade 7 and ends in grade 12. The Extended Core French Program includes a French course **and** a social studies course taught in French in each grade level.

At the senior high school level, time allotment will be as prescribed in the *Public School Programs* document.

The social studies courses shall be as prescribed in the *Public School Programs* document.

Early French Immersion Program

Anglophone school boards may offer an Early French Immersion Program that starts in grade primary and ends in grade 12.

The percentage of instruction in the French language is apportioned as follows:

P–Grade 2	90 - 100%
Grades 3–6	80 - 85%
Grades 7– 9	60 - 70%
Grades 10–12	minimum of nine credits taught in French

The percentage of instruction in French varies in grades primary to 6 due to the availability of specialists, e.g. music teachers, physical education teachers, or other specialists who do not speak French. Formal English instruction is introduced in grade 3, hence the reduction in the percentage of instruction in French from grades 3 to 6.

In order to obtain the **French Immersion Certificate** students in senior high school early immersion must

- successfully complete the French Language Arts course in grades 10, 11, and 12
- successfully complete, each year, a minimum of two courses where the language of instruction is French (excluding Core French)
- for students beginning grade 10 in September 1996, successfully complete during their high school career, a total of nine courses where the language of instruction is French. This represents 50 percent of the number of credits required for graduation.

The courses offered in the Early French Immersion Program will be as prescribed in the *Public School Programs* document.

Late French Immersion Program

Anglophone school boards may offer a Late French Immersion Program that starts in Grade 7 (following Core French in grades 4–6) and ends in grade 12.

The percentage of instruction in the French language is apportioned as follows:

grades 7– 9	70 - 75%
grades 10–12	minimum of nine credits taught in French

In order to obtain the **French Immersion Certificate** students in senior high school late French immersion must

- successfully complete the French Language Arts course in grades 10, 11, and 12
- successfully complete, each year, a minimum of two courses where the language of instruction is French (excluding Core French)
- for students beginning Grade 10 in September 1996, successfully complete during their high school career, a total of nine courses where the language of instruction is French. This represents 50 percent of the number of credits required for graduation.

The courses offered in the Late French Immersion Program will be as prescribed in the *Public School Programs* document.

GUIDELINES

Program Implementation

Roles and Responsibilities of Partners

Department of Education and Culture

It is the responsibility of the Department of Education and Culture to provide leadership and orientation for French second language programs in Nova Scotia public schools. In this context, the Department of Education and Culture should consult and/or seek participation of the regional school boards in program development and the establishment of policy and outcomes. It should also maintain regular, open lines of communication with the regional school boards.

Regional School Boards

It is the responsibility of regional school boards to provide leadership and to administer French second language programs in the system. In this context, each regional school board should assign a second language co-ordinator to supervise French second language programs as well as to organize, and conduct classroom visitations, teacher consultations, and in-service training. They should also ensure the hiring of staff qualified to teach in French second language programs and assign bilingual student services personnel to address the program and other requirements of French second language students with special needs.

Principal

It is the responsibility of the principal to provide leadership in the implementation and administration of French second language programs and courses in the school. In this context, a principal should ensure that sufficient teaching time is allocated to allow students to reach the learning outcomes of French second language programs and provide a classroom that allows teachers to create an environment that will promote, support, and facilitate the learning of French. The principal should also work toward creating a school environment that supports French second language learning. S/he should provide opportunities for teachers of French second language programs within his/her school to meet with one another or with French teachers from other schools in order to conference and generally support one another. Finally, s/he should provide opportunities for French second language teachers to attend professional development sessions where French is the working language.

Teacher

It is the duty of the French second language teacher to teach French second language courses as prescribed in the *Public School Programs* document and to implement teaching strategies that permit students to reach the required learning outcomes. In this context, teachers should participate in professional development opportunities related to their assigned areas of teaching, encourage students in the pursuit of learning French as a second language, communicate with parents and provide leadership in the school community.

Program Description

Core French

Research and good practice has shown that Core French should be scheduled for a minimum of 40 minutes a day from grades 4 to 12 inclusively. This amount of time is required for the learner to achieve a reasonable level of second language communicative ability. It is recommended that wherever it is reasonably possible, a specific classroom be designated for teaching French in order to create and maintain an atmosphere facilitating French second language learning. As well students should have access to currently authorized teaching materials as well as to a variety of supplementary resources, including authentic documents and technology.

Extended Core French

The establishment of the Extended Core French Program represents a long-term commitment on the part of a regional board. In grades 7–12, French Language Arts courses should be designed to support the students' language needs in the respective social studies courses. It is recommended that wherever it is reasonably possible, the same teacher be responsible for both French and social studies at each level. This will facilitate an integrated, interdisciplinary program organization based on the natural affinity between these two courses and on their connected learning outcomes, as suggested in the *Public School Programs* document. The total amount of time allotted for the Extended Core French (French and social studies) should be equal to the total amount of time allotted for English Language Arts and social studies in the English program. In order to create and maintain an atmosphere that supports and facilitates French second language learning, it is recommended that wherever it is reasonably possible, a specific classroom be dedicated to the Extended Core French teacher. Students should have access to currently authorized teaching materials as well as to a variety of supplementary resources, including authentic documents and technology.

Early and Late French Immersion

The aim of French immersion programs is to enable students to become functionally bilingual. It is therefore recommended that schools maintain the highest percentage of instruction time in French. At the elementary level, all instruction should be in French with the exception of English Language Arts and those courses taught by specialists who cannot speak French. The recommended subjects taught in French for grades 7, 8, and 9 are French Language Arts, Social Studies, Mathematics, Science, and Personal Development and Relationships. A variety of courses can be offered along with the required French Language Arts courses in French immersion programs at the senior high level. Students' needs and interests, as well as available expertise should be considered in determining which courses to offer in French at this level. In order to create and maintain an atmosphere that supports and facilitates French Second Language learning, a specific classroom should be assigned to the French immersion teacher. Students should have access to currently authorized teaching materials as well as to a variety of supplementary resources, including authentic documents and technology.

Staff Requirements for all French Teachers

All French second language teachers should have an excellent command of written and spoken French and a working knowledge of English. Further more they should have knowledge and training in current second language and/or immersion teaching methodologies, a concentration in the subject areas taught and training in the use of appropriate methods and strategies for the grade levels and subject areas in question.

Special Needs Services

Students with special needs are capable of learning another language. Most learning difficulties are not language-specific. Students can acquire strategies to overcome these difficulties in a

French or an English setting. Once acquired, these strategies can be transferred to either setting when the student is shown the connections. Likewise, behavioural or social difficulties have nothing to do with the language of instruction. In view of this, schools must provide the human and material resources to meet special needs requirements of students in French programs. One of the important elements in ensuring a positive and satisfactory experience for a student with special needs is open and friendly communication between teachers and parent(s)/guardian(s).

All students should have equal access to special services where available. For schools offering French immersion programs, it is preferable to provide special needs services in French. However, in instances where the French service is not possible, a close working relationship among the immersion teacher, the unilingual learning specialist, and the parent(s)/guardian(s) is critical.

Exemptions from Core French

A variety of teaching and evaluation strategies and appropriate program modifications should be made within the French classroom to accommodate a wide range of learners. It is only when the student experiences a continued lack of success despite these accommodations that an exemption should be considered.

The decision to exempt students from French must be made on an individual, student-by-student basis. A consensus about whether an exemption is to be granted should be reached by the school program planning team consisting of, at a minimum, parent(s)/guardian(s), the principal, the Core French teacher, the home room teacher, and a school or district student services representative and, where appropriate, the student.

The team should consider any relevant information about the student including:

- history of first language acquisition
- history of French language acquisition
- learning strengths and weaknesses
- formal or informal assessment information

The process can be initiated at any time for individual students—elementary, junior, or senior high, depending on the student's needs. Statistics on the number of exemptions are to be submitted to the Director, Acadian and French Language Services.

Transferring from French Immersion to the English Program

French immersion does not cause learning difficulties. **Any decision to change the placement of a student must be in the best interest of the student, not of the program, the parent(s)/guardian(s), or the teachers**. Switching from an immersion program to the English program can have a negative impact on the student's self-esteem. It is important to realize that a student leaving French immersion will not automatically overcome his or her learning difficulty.

The decision to remove a student from the immersion program should be a program planning team decision involving the student, the immersion teacher, the learning specialist(s), the principal, and the parent(s)/guardian(s). The decision to remove a student from an immersion program must not be made lightly or hastily.

There is general agreement that students with special needs should stay in French immersion if they are achieving, and if adequate support services are available. French immersion offers many benefits to students with learning difficulties. Research has shown that the ability to speak French may significantly enhance a student's self-esteem. The pedagogical approaches used, such as contextualizing, respecting and linking prior knowledge, valuing different ways of knowing and doing, are well suited to the needs of students with learning difficulties.

As in the English program, curriculum in immersion programs can be adapted to meet the varying needs of all students. Teaching practices must include a variety of strategies that correspond to the learning styles of all students. Depending on the nature of the concern, modifications may need to be made to the program.

However, there are times when a transfer **should be considered**:

- if leaving the program would give the student access to critical services.
- if the child is not achieving and the program planning team is convinced that this situation will not exist in the English program.

For further information regarding the policies and guidelines for special education, teachers and school officials should consult the *Special Education Policy Manual, 1996.*

Transferring from Extended Core French

The same considerations and process as that described for students in a French immersion program should apply to transfers from Extended Core French to the English program.

Local Pilot Courses

Approval is required to offer a French program or course that is not described in the *Public School Programs* document. Approval is also required to use textbooks and other related teaching materials not included in the authorized lists.

Schools wishing to offer local pilot courses should follow the procedure as outlined in the *Public School Programs* document.